**Lexington Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)**

**Lexington Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA)**

**Business Meeting Minutes**

**May 29, 2020**

Attendees: Patricia Jacotin, Emma Harding, Colette Powell, Carissa Black, Sara Cuthbertson, Scott Bokun, Georgia Swann, Jaina Morgan, Bronte Abraham, Maria Bertram, Ashley Waring, Carol Webb, Deb Osber, Radwa Palassian, Beverly Montgomery, Sophia Aronis, Mona Roy, Lori Wright, Jenna Martin, Pamela Goldstein

Call to order: 4:05pm

Adjourn: 5:15pm

Proposed ILP Kindergarten Move

* Overview provided by Georgia Swann, parent liaison to LCP
* Parent concerns:
  + Parents weren’t notified and felt that it was very rushed—initial communication was received on Friday, 5/22/2020, were offered a brief phone call, and then were told SC would vote on Tuesday 5/26/2020.
  + Most parents already had placement meetings and had toured Fiske and met the teacher.
  + All parents are concerned about adding an extra transition midway through elementary school.
  + Parents are unfamiliar with the physical space at Bowman and unsure if they are appropriate, i.e. bathrooms in classrooms?.
  + No information was given on which staff would be participating at Bowman, what level of training they have on ASD, ABA.
* Concerns moving forward:
  + A follow up communication was received by the LCP parents on 5/24/2020 to advise that the incoming cohort of LCP students will be placed at Fiske ILP in the school year 2020/21 K, but that it would be subject to change in the fall of 2021 and for subsequent incoming ILP Kindergarteners in 2021.
  + All parents voiced the concern of feeder patterns from Bowman to Clarke, so even if they’re there K-5 would then most likely shift to Diamond after elementary school, which is not ideal.
* Recommendations:
  + Parents recommend the District review the ILP needs across elementary and middle schools, look at possibly two/three ILP specialised elementary options, allowing for progression from sub-separate to less sub-separate instruction within the same elementary school. Move towards building capacity for ILP programs serving the spectrum of childrens’ needs in both Clarke and Diamond middles schools, meeting students needs on a more individual basis.
  + Evaluate the space at Fiske for the ILP program, find a solution to enable the 2020-21 cohort of Kindergarteners to continue at Fiske through to 5th grade, to prevent the detrimental effects of transitioning for these intensely vulnerable children.

Parent Discussion

* Parent #1:
  + Numbers way off from Friday plan to Sunday plan—Fiske enrollment declining from 90 down to 30 from Friday to Monday, so concerned about overcrowding and accuracy of numbers.
  + District did not provide any clarity or details on the long-term plan.
    - SC members indicated they don’t have clarity either on the numbers, but appears that with grandfathering, etc, it was a lot lower than expected.
    - Having three Kindergarten classrooms still allow for wiggle room.
  + Also not clear what happens next year if Fiske is over-crowded again—does ILP group go back to Bowman for 1st grade?
  + Also looking for guidance around remote assessments, especially if kids haven’t been assessed for ESY.
* Parent #2:
  + Timing of the ILP decition makes it hard to not feel like they were trying to push this through, especially given that redistricting was so drawn out.
  + Doesn’t understand why Fiske ILP kids wouldn’t stay put and other students move given that there is not a guarantee that gened children go to their geo-coded school.
  + Originally in early 2000s ILP at Hastings had a substantially separate class as well as the co-taught program. The sub-separate classroom transitioned to Hastings from Fiske in 3rd grade. One of the big reasons that approach didn’t work is that the District realized it was counter-productive to invest so much in social skills, etc. for the ILP children only to have them change schools several times. The ILP children changed at Grade 3 and their only cohort were the other sub-separate kids in their class. And then the Hastings ILP co-teaching group went to Diamond and the sub-separate kids went to Clarke—another transition.
  + It seems like Lexington is trying to resuscitate an idea that we’ve already found out didn’t work. We should be work very hard to not repeat a mistake we already learned from. Suggested it might be better to have two parallel sub-separate programs versus having kids move.
  + Also seems strange that there is a big new school and yet the discussion is to move the ILP to Bowman. There should be a discussion of Hastings being a possibility. According to the Site Council for Hastings the whole point was to make the building flexible for any type of student.
* Parent #3:
  + Very concerned that the district cannot find a way to have the ILP children be in the same school K-5 and then continue to same middle school as peers. Would like to see a long-term plan for this, and is disappointed that the District said this was being discussed in winter and parents weren’t involved.
* Parent #4
  + She is concerned that they might not have enough space at Fiske for all 7-9 kids.
* Parent #5:
  + We need to have a review of ILP capacity overall. It was really painful to hear the Hastings principal say that her school couldn’t support children with more significant needs.
  + If the district is pushing more towards inclusion, we need to stop saying ILP 1/2/3.
  + Wants clarification on if current K’s will stay at Fiske, and what happens to 2021-2022 kindergarteners.
* Parent #5:
  + Fiske was originally built with the idea that the ILP was coming in—had specialized OT room, classroom with bathrooms, etc. If there truly isn’t enough room at Fiske and the district wants to move to a more inclusive model, it might make sense for this cohort to build capacity in other places.
  + Bowman is a great place, but concerned that it doesn’t think have the physical space to accommodate ILP needs and that it feeds to the wrong middle school.
* Parent #6:
  + Strongly feel that where a child starts elementary school is where they should stay.
  + Very concerned about managing transitions and the social piece.
* Patricia Jacotin (co-chair): How can we ensure that the ILP children aren’t moved mid-stream?
  + Scott Bokun (SC liaison):
    - Continue to mention the concern in all correspondence with LPS, so it is in the forefront.
    - Suggests SEPAC send list to Dr. Hackett of the questions and concerns raised in this meeting.
    - Parents should send concerns directly if they’re comfortable.
  + Sara Cuthbertson (SC liaison):
    - The timing is disappointing with the Inclusion CIT on-hold.
    - Specialized programs are also something that is talked about a lot in Master Planning, so also a bit surprised by this.
* Parent #7:
  + Want to see the ILP program in both MS’s at some point.
  + An LCP admininstrator mentioned having so large an ILP program at Fiske is a burden for the gened kids, which was disappointing to hear. So would like more outreach, especially to parents.
* Parent #8:
  + Agree that the Inclusion CIT would be great, but want to acknowledge that the timing will be difficult, as the CIT is unlikely to have a long-term plan in place by decision time for next group of 2021 Kindergarteners.
  + Also would ask that the LCP parents are involved much earlier in the process.
* Parent #9:
  + Surprised that there was lack of space at Fiske given redistricting.
* Parent #10:
  + Asked for input on best way for parents to collaborate with the district around remote learning.
  + Kids have been without services (direct virtual live therapies/instruction) for almost 3mos. If doing this for the large portion of next year we need a better plan, as children with these profiles can’t go significant lengths of time without interventions or will regress meaningfully.
  + Disappointed that at SC meetings hearing the theme that everyone is happy, and that isn’t what she’s hearing from friends.
  + Parents feel defeated and unheard, so aren’t writing letters anymore.
    - Scott Bokun (SC Liaison): Suggests writing again and telling School Committee and LPS what is and isn’t working.
    - Emma Harding (Co-chair): Suggested that parents can write to SEPAC if uncomfortable writing directly, and SEPAC will redact and forward to SC/LPS.
    - Sara Cuthbertson (SC Liaison): Continue to work with the SPED liaisons at the schools first, and then elevate up if not getting a response.
* Parent #11:
  + It was clear from the last call hosted by the Mass Advocates for Children that Lexington ia an outlier as a district in not providing virtual services in OT/PT/Speech
* Parent #12:
  + DDS supervisor also indicated that LPS is an outlier in not providing services
* Parent #13:
  + Remote learning model isn’t working well for her kids full-stop, on any level of ability.
  + She knows the level of services LPS is providing is not what people in other communities are receiving. It is discouraging, and we need to look at it with urgency.
* Parent #14:
  + The years that her son made friends in K-2 at Fiske were really important for the rest of his school career.
* Parent #15:
  + Suggests that parents should take data.
  + Patricia Jacotin (Co-chair): SEPAC has consistently advised that parents should document everything, and do not refuse services as that limits ability to get compensatory services.
* Parent #16:
  + Her child was out-of-district and now is back in LPS. She sees him being more social and engaged now so very concerned that he will get moved between schools again.
* Reminded parents of the SEPTA Support Groups.
* NOLAP (Network of Lexington Autism Parents) has a meeting Monday night at 8pm. Please see website for details.